

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tara McGuinness

December 15, 2005

(202) 225-2836

WHITE HOUSE FLIP FLOPS ON TORTURE SUPPORTS TORTURE BAN . . .MAYBE

Bush, Cheney, Goss stray from 'stay the course' strategy on torture and other cruel and degrading treatment

WASHINGTON, DC – After a knock-down drag-out fight with the White House, Senator John McCain succeeded in inserting language to the Department of Defense authorization bill that bans cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of foreign suspects in the war on terror. The concession came less than a day after the House of Representatives voted 308- to 122 in favor of the McCain language. Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) author of the "Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act," and of a House-passed provision barring any Defense Department funding from being spent in contravention of the Geneva Convention Against Torture, made the following statement in response to the news that a compromise had been reached.

"Today the Bush Administration has conceded and accepted Senator McCain's amendment prohibiting the use of abusive interrogation techniques. But this victory will be short-lived if the Bush Administration continues a policy of "extraordinary rendition" that has "disappeared" hundreds of detainees into the night – often by sending them to countries known to practice torture," said Rep. Markey.

The McCain amendment bans U.S. military personnel from engaging in cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of foreign suspects. The language does not explicitly address the practice of extraordinary rendition – the technique of transferring terrorist suspects to countries that are known to practice torture after receiving diplomatic assurances that the country will not torture detainees.

"While any reasonable reading of the laws against torture and its restatement in the McCain amendment would prohibit the practice of "torture by proxy," this Administration has repeatedly sought to excuse the practice of rendition to countries involved in torture. There's an old Tom Lehrer song that went, "'Once the rockets are up, who cares where they come down that's not my department,' says Wernher Von Braun." These days, Secretary Rice seeks to evade responsibility by saying "we just deliver the suspects to foreign secret police ... what they do after that is not our business." For that reason, I intend to continue pressing the Administration to